



EmployeeUPDATE

Our Mission: To serve the people of North Carolina by enabling individuals, families and communities to be healthy and secure, and to achieve social and economic well-being.

A monthly publication for employees of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

DHHS focuses on employee wellness

Many employees make a new year's resolution to eat more healthy foods, become more active, quit smoking, or reduce stress in their lives. Too often, those good resolutions are abandoned after only a few weeks or months. Dix campus employees now have greater support at work to help them make and keep new year's resolutions to improve their health and wellness.

Celebrating national Healthy Weight Week, more than 500 Dix campus employees turned out on January 18 for a festive and fun health fair in the Haywood Gym. They sampled healthy snack items, danced the electric slide, and reduced stress with a neck massage and a laugh-filled magic show. At the Move More booth, over a hundred employees signed up for one of many Dix campus walking clubs to make physical activity a part of their regular work week. Thirty-eight vendors provided information on tobacco cessation, physical activity opportunities in the community, healthy food choices, and many other healthy lifestyle activities and resources. The



State Health Plan provided employees an on-site opportunity to take a personal health risk assessment as well as learn more about their HealthSmart initiative for employees. This initiative includes a personal health coach service available 24 hours a day for all State Health Plan members.

A highlight of the Dix event was a health walk led by Secretary Carmen Hooker Odom. Despite a cold and windy afternoon, a large group of employees joined the Secretary for a half-mile walk on campus, the first in a series of weekly walks. Participants received pedometers and a copy of the new Dix campus walking map, which lays out six walking routes of different lengths (also available at www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/index.htm).

Speaking to the group, the Secretary talked about DHHS workplace wellness efforts and Eat Smart, Move More...North Carolina, the statewide healthy eating and physical activity movement that helps people find ways to make simple

Cont. on page 2

INSIDE TOP FEATURES

Dr. Herman Easom Memorial, Page 5
More school nurses in Catawba County, Page 6
DHHS Career Banding, Pages 9 – 10

**Leadership
DHHS**

 **Page 3**



**"Color Me Healthy"
Wins National
Award**

 **Page 7**



Employee Wellness cont. from page 1

but permanent lifestyle changes to achieve and maintain a healthy weight. The Secretary emphasized the important health benefits of even small and moderate amounts of physical activity on a weekly basis. She pointed to a new interactive web site, MyEatSmartMoveMore.com, that gives easy, helpful tips and tools for starting and maintaining a healthier lifestyle. It also features resources for North Carolinians who want to make healthy changes in their homes, preschools, schools, churches, worksites and communities.

The Dix health fair was part of the new DHHS Wellness collaborative initiative with the State Health Plan. Wellness committees from Dix campus agencies, led by Barbara Whitaker with DMA, organized the successful fair. The DHHS Wellness Director, Suzanna Young, observed that many health fairs are annual events that may motivate participants to make changes to improve their health, but they do not provide the ongoing support needed to help individuals make permanent lifestyle changes. The Dix campus health fair was different since it was the kickoff event for agency wellness programs that will provide ongoing support to help employees become more active during the work day and to have access in the work place to healthy snack and lunch choices, resources to help them quit tobacco use, and better ways to manage stress.



Leaving the fair, one employee shared that she had made a new year's resolution to walk 15 minutes every day. She said she knew exercise would help reduce her blood pressure and stress as well as give her more energy but, after only two weeks, she had stopped walking because of a long commute and having to rush home to care for her elderly mother. Like many employees, she realized that if the opportunity to exercise was not available at work, it would probably not happen. She signed up for the lunch-time walking club and said she thought the group support would help her be more active.



Employees of the divisions of Social Services and Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services, the Office of the Controller and the Child Support Enforcement Section joined Stormy the National Hockey League Carolina Hurricanes' mascot, in a Wellness2006 kickoff walk on Jan. 6. The brisk walk (rollerblade for Stormy) started at the courtyard of the Albemarle Building and circled the nearby Administration Building in the government complex near downtown Raleigh. The walk was sponsored by the Wellness Committees of the divisions.

Other DHHS agencies also held kickoff events in the past month for their new employee wellness programs. On January 6, in extremely cold weather, 250 employees in the Albemarle building turned out for a lunch time wellness walk. Led by Stormy, the Carolina Hurricanes mascot, the 15-minute downtown walk was a fun and energizing event. Will Brown, Wellness Representative for DSS, plans to make walking groups a regular event for Albemarle employees, like the agencies on Dix campus are doing. ■

Leadership DHHS Gets Positive Reviews

In the October 2005 edition of the DHHS Employee Newsletter, you learned about *Leadership DHHS*, a six-session training series created by the DHHS Steering Committee on Succession Planning now offered to department employees demonstrating leadership potential. The first three classes of *Leadership DHHS* were held in Raleigh and covered such issues as individual communications styles, dealing with the media and the General Assembly, and emerging issues facing the department. In addition to presentations and discussions of topics of interest, participants are expected to work collaboratively in small groups to address particular challenges they face in the work environment or that face the department as a whole.

In December, Secretary Carmen Hooker Odom spent almost an hour with the group, telling them how pleased she is to have a program such as *Leadership DHHS* because developing future leaders is critical to the future of the department. She thanked participants not only for being part of the program but also for their dedication to public service. For most participants this was their first time experience interacting with the Secretary and asking her questions about her vision for the department and the *Leadership DHHS* program.

To date comments about the program have been very positive.

Asa Fleming with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services commented: "I am pleased to be a part of the first *Leadership DHHS* program. I have already benefited from the Communication Styles Assessment done at the first session. It enabled me to look at my personal communicating style, and made me aware of how to communicate with others. I feel fortunate to be involved, and I know this program will benefit me in the future."

Heather Laffler with the Division of Child Development, commented: "So far, I've very much enjoyed the *Leadership DHHS* sessions. . . . all in all . . . it's been a very valuable and productive endeavor, and a GREAT opportunity to meet folks from other divisions and learn more about what they and their agencies do and the issues they're dealing with."

Three more classes will complete the series for the "inaugural" Class of '06. As mentioned previously, attendants will participate in a series of presentations from current leaders within the department as well as elsewhere in state government and perhaps the private sector. Each presentation

will be followed by discussion and questions and answers to allow participants to relate their own experiences on the topic. Participants will also work in teams on particular challenges or problem areas to develop solutions and recommendations. It is hoped the sessions will provide participants with skills and knowledge to learn more about their own leadership styles and capabilities. Graduation is scheduled for April 19 with attendance from department senior management expected.

Leadership DHHS is just a start, and the succession planning steering committee will continue to meet monthly to look at more IDEAs to address departmental human resource and leadership needs now and in the future. Please share your ideas and suggestions with the following members of the steering committee: Linda Povlich, Office of the Secretary; Kathy Gruer, Human Resources; Sandra Trivett, Office of Policy and Planning; Libby Robb, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services; Mark Prakke, Division of Information Resource Management; Jeff Horton, Division of Facility Services; Steve Hairston, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services; or Dwight Pearson, Office of Education Services. ■





Jalil Isa

iSalud y Saludos!

'Fitting In'

I often write about my struggles on 'fitting in.' As I've commented in the past, my ethnic heritage, nationality, and appearance sometimes seem to clash to the skeptical eye... rather than mesh into one cohesive self. I say this because of my past experiences of traveling abroad—when all possible adjectives have been used to describe who I am. Take a trip I once took to Russia where, to the armed guards at the airport, I looked Chechen; but they could tell my name was Middle-Eastern; I had mentioned I was Hispanic when they took me away from the large crowds for the subsequent lengthy interrogation; but yet knew I was a U.S. passport-holding American. They were a bit confused by all this, to say the least!

Now move forward to just a couple of months ago. I took a trip where, for the first time since I can remember, I felt like I really fit in somewhere (in some ways). I wasn't constantly stopped by police; I wasn't made to feel like I was unwelcomed to a business; I didn't feel like I was being scrutinized.

"Welcome to Egypt," I kept hearing over and over as I exited Cairo's airport and entered the chaos of this city of more than 15-million residents. Hard to believe this metropolis' population is nearly double that of North Carolina's. And it shows in the madness. I've never seen such crazy driving and filth in

a city before. But in talking to some visitors and students living in this mayhem, they say it's easy to get used to—even offering a certain charm. I suppose the same can be said about New York. I, however, prefer the charm that the more subdued Raleigh and its surroundings offer me.

But one thing that North Carolina and its capital hasn't always offered is a feeling of acceptance (now, I should point out that incidents leading me to make this statement are, luckily, few and very far between). But it's funny how when I returned from Egypt, the first thing I commented on was just how friendly and welcoming everyone was—even after they learned I was American by birth. The Arab culture in general is a very hospitable one. You don't go anywhere without being invited for tea. The cab driver who initially turned his back on me when I offered to pay a very very low fare (as compared to what I assume he's used to getting from Americans) ended up inviting me to tea in the course of our travels. Egyptians regularly walked up to me speaking Arabic. I only wish I could have responded back. My appearance certainly opened doors for me. My spoken communication, however, closed many of those doors. You could see their surprise, at times, as they looked at me puzzled after approaching and addressing me in

Egyptian... forcing me to reply, "Sorry, I don't speak any Arabic."

While English is quite limited in the masses of the uneducated—and sadly, there are many... particularly in the more rural areas—I tried to get by as best I could. Overall, while it was a remarkable and eye-opening experience on cultural differences, I still came away feeling like it was far too 'foreign' of a land for me. The differences are great. At every turn—once it was clear I was a tourist—I had to constantly be on guard from exorbitant prices that were quoted left and right for any item on sale. And while the outward appearances reflected a truly welcoming attitude, I can't help but question whether their outward appearances match their deeper feelings about me and my background/nationality/etc. Whether there was any degree of hypocrisy or not remains unclear. But at this point, perhaps that's a moot point.

Oh, and in case you were wondering why I decided to pay a visit to the Land of Pharaohs ... it just happened to be the destination I could get the 'biggest-bang-for-my-mile' in terms of using up a stash of frequent flyer points. ■

Dr. Herman F. Easom Memorial



Dr. Herman F. Easom

Dr. Herman F. Easom, the longest serving public health employee in North Carolina, died Dec. 16, in Wilson County, at the age of 103.

A native of Selma, Dr. Easom graduated from UNC-Chapel Hill in 1925 and received his medical degree from Washington University in St. Louis, Mo., in 1927.

His career is legendary in the state public health system. He created the state's Department of Occupational Health in the 1930s and continued to work in various capacities until 2002 – over 70 years. His last endeavor was reading X-rays, for the Wilson and Edgecombe County Health departments, making him the longest continuously serving public health employee in the history of the state.

“I can't think of any other physician who practiced at such a high level for such an extended period of time, always with the utmost devotion to his patients and to his state, said former State Health Director Ron Levine. He was an inspiration to us all.”

The U.S. Public Health Service published some of his research papers

in the field of X-ray. Many of his papers eventually became the basis of national health policies followed by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention with the National Institute of Health.

His work with the state began in 1929 at N.C. Sanatorium in McCain where he served as a clinic physician until 1942. There was a four-year break in which he was the director of the Division of Industrial Hygiene for the State Board of Health. In 1942 he moved to Wilson to supervise the building and operation of the new Eastern North Carolina Sanatorium, now the NC Special Care Center. He served as the Associate Director and Medical Director until 1975.

He served on the Medical Committee for the N.C. Dusty Trades which he founded in 1935 and chaired until 2000.

At 103, Dr. Easom was the oldest member of the North Carolina Medical Society, and had been a member for 76 years, the longest NCMS membership.

He received the state's highest honor – the Order of the Longleaf Pine – in 1998. ■

Partnerships and creative thinking mean more school nurses in Catawba County

An innovative partnership between the Catawba County Public Health Department, the Catawba Valley Medical Center, the county's three public school systems, and the Catawba County Board of Commissioners is resulting in better health care for school children in the county.

In 2004, the State Board of Education recommended a minimum ratio of one school nurse for every 750 students, in accordance with recommendations by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). But only 10 North Carolina school systems met that ratio. Catawba County fell far short of that ideal, even with two new school nurse positions provided by the State School Nurse Funding Initiative in 2004.

Recognizing that local efforts were needed to help close the gap, Catawba County community leaders banded together. The health department, with the support of the Board of Commissioners, was already supporting 10 school nurse positions and 5 school health assistant positions and operating a school-based/school-linked health center. Last August, Catawba Valley Medical Center allocated funding to support five

additional school nurse positions, bringing the total to 15.

However, even with that growth, there were still not enough school nurses to adequately address the health needs of 23,822 students in Catawba County. The ratio of nurse to students was still 1:1,600, with nurses serving more than twice the recommended number of children.

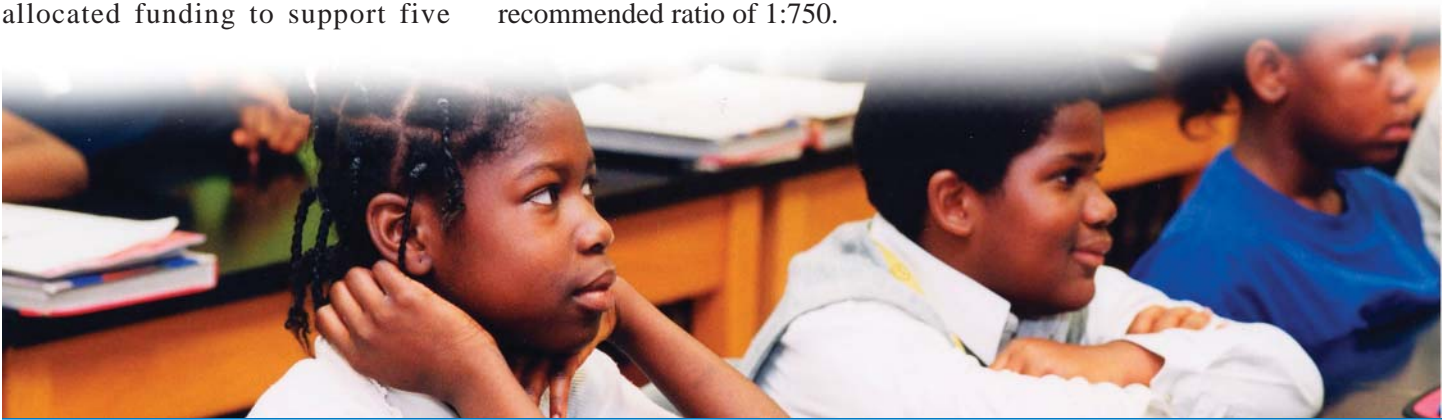
So, the medical center, health department, schools and commissioners worked together to apply for a \$667,000 grant from the Duke Endowment to help build the county's school nurse program into a *Coordinated School Health Program*. In late December, the medical center received notice that the three-year grant was approved.

When added to the planned subsidy by the medical center, the investment of the county's three school systems, and the existing funding from the health department, the Duke grant means that Catawba County can increase the total number of school nurses to 23. That means the county will have 1 nurse for every 1,000 students, much closer to the recommended ratio of 1:750.

"After we add the new positions and fully implement the program, we anticipate the results to be reduced school absenteeism, fewer behavior problems in the classroom, improved student academic performance, and new levels of cooperation and collaboration among parents, teachers, school and health officials," said Catawba County Health Director Douglas W. Urland.

"This is a prime example of how state funds can jumpstart local efforts to improve students' health," said Dorothy Caldwell, coordinator of School Health Initiatives for the Division of Public Health.

"Moreover, this level of community collaboration is a model for communities across the state who want to improve student health and enhance learning readiness," Caldwell said. "No one agency could have increased school nurse positions from 10 to 23, but, working together, the health department, school districts and county commissioners made it happen." ■



"Color Me Healthy" Wins National Award



Color Me Healthy, an educational program for 4- and 5-year olds developed by the N.C. Division of Public Health and N.C. State University, has received the 2005 Nemours Vision Award for Excellence in Child Health Promotion and Disease Prevention. Based in Delaware, Nemours is dedicated to providing pediatric care, research and health education programs to restore and improve the health of children regardless of financial status.

Established in 2005, the Nemours Vision Awards recognize the work of one U.S. community organization or government agency from outside of Delaware, as well as one Delaware agency, that have developed visionary and effective programs for children and their families.

Color Me Healthy is a program developed for child care providers to reach children ages four and five with fun, interactive learning opportunities on physical activity and healthy eating. It stimulates all of the senses of young children: touch, smell, sight, sound, and, of course, taste. Through the use of color, music, and exploration of the senses, *Color Me Healthy* teaches children that healthy food and physical



Cathy Thomas with the Division of Public Health (left) and Dr. Carolyn Dunn (R) with the N.C. Cooperative Extension Service, co-authors of *Color Me Healthy*, received the Vision Award from Debbie Chang, Nemours Health and Prevention Services Senior Vice President and Executive Director. The award, which included \$5,000 for the program, was presented at the Nemours Conference on Child Health Promotion in Wilmington, Delaware in December.

activity are fun. Teacher, parent and student materials and activities are available in both English and Spanish.

Cooperative Extension Service agents and their county partners have trained over 6,000 child care providers in creative and effective ways to use the program in North Carolina. *Color Me Healthy* is now being used in 40 states across the nation.

For more information about *Color Me Healthy* visit the web site at www.colormehealthy.com. ■

Doug Campbell receives SEPHLI award

As he completed a year-long Southeast Public Health Leadership Institute in December, Dr. Doug Campbell won the 2004-2005 “Best Leadership Project Award” in the area of “Assurance in Public Health.” Campbell is head of the Occupational and Environmental Epidemiology Branch in the Division of Public Health.

Campbell’s project was to develop a study to determine if the state’s new rules governing the decontamination of methamphetamine labs are effective in practice.

Now in its ninth year, SEPHLI is a year-long, multi-state, leadership development program directed by the University of North Carolina School of Public Health for mid- to senior-level public health administrators working in the mid-Atlantic states of North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia. Participants work in teams and individually to learn and practice an array of leadership skills, such as critical thinking, effective communication, and collaboration.

Other Division of Public Health employees in the 2004-2005 class were Carol Tant Children and Youth Branch; Susan Chappell-Witt, Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention; and Gustavo Fernandez, State Center for Health Statistics (now retired). Three local health directors were also in the class – Jane Murray from Scotland County (who won the “Best All-Around Scholar Award” for the year), Janice Patterson from Clay County, and Jenny Lassiter from Pamlico County. The leadership team that included Chappell-Witt won the year’s “SEPHLI Team Work” award.

“This was a year-long effort, with a huge amount of time spent by me and others, and it’s nice to get acknowledged for that,” Campbell said. “The program



Doug Campbell

is very demanding, but we get a lot of valuable things out of it. I’m very glad I was given this opportunity – I learned a huge amount and grew in many positive ways through the experience.”

“My mentor was Dr. Ronald Levine, past state health director, who met and worked with me, and I am very grateful to him for his help,” Campbell said. ■

Wilson Receives Award



Lawrence D. Wilson

Lawrence D. Wilson, director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, received a National Recognition Award at the 2005 National Fall Weatherization Conference. The award is given by the U.S. Department of Energy and recognizes individuals who have demonstrated outstanding commitment in the areas of leadership, innovation, service, partner-

ship and public outreach within the weatherization network. Lawrence was recognized Dec. 13 in Atlanta for his exemplary leadership, extraordinary initiative, and dedication to the program’s goal to provide training to the North Carolina Weatherization network since October 2000, when he was given responsibility for the state’s Weatherization Assistance Program. ■

DHHS teachers receive National Board Certification

The Office of Education Services (OES) has announced that five DHHS teachers were certified during the 2005 certification cycle as National Board Certified Teachers by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS).

“We have an outstanding group of teachers working in our programs,” said Cyndie Bennett, superintendent of the OES. “This certification validates their commitment to providing a quality education for our students.”

The teachers certified this year teach in programs across the state: Kathy Buckner, Laura Lassiter, and Paula Roten from Governor Morehead Preschool in

Raleigh; Jesudasan Mangalan from Murdoch Center in Butner, and William Leavy from Caswell Center in Kinston.

Teachers in all DHHS educational programs are eligible to participate if they hold a continuing North Carolina teaching license, have been employed by the state for at least three years and are in a state-paid position.

Currently, there are 9,818 National Board Certified Teachers in North Carolina, more than any other state. The newly certified teachers bring the DHHS total to 27. Nationally, there are over 47,501 Board Certified Teachers.

Founded 17 years ago, NBPTS is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan, and non-governmental organization dedicated to advancing the quality of teaching and learning. National Board Certification is the high credential in the teaching profession. A voluntary process established by NBPTS, certification is achieved through a rigorous performance-based assessment that takes between one and three years to complete and measures what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do. ■

Career Banding in DHHS

In this follow-up to our December introductory article, we'll provide an update on the latest developments in Career Banding at DHHS. Career Banding is the new statewide Human Resource system that affects the way we classify, recruit, hire, pay, promote, evaluate, and provide career development opportunities for our employees.

What is Happening Now?

The first groups of Law Enforcement positions in DHHS are being converted to the new Career Banded titles effective February 1. The current Police Officer I, II, and III positions and Police Chiefs are being “rolled over” into the new Banded Classes of Public Safety



Officer or Public Safety Supervisor. Facility Human Resource Managers and Public Safety Supervisors attended training on January 12 and 13 on competency assessment, salary administration, recruitment/selection, and administrative procedures under the new Career Banding system.

Central Office Human Resource staff has been working over the last several months with Law Enforcement Chiefs, managers, supervisors, and employee representatives in planning this rollover to the new system. The team has analyzed the employee positions to determine how they fit under the new broader classes. They have also made plans on how to assess competencies under the new system and how to work on employee career development goals under the new Banded classes.

What's next?

The Career Banding web site at www.dhhs.state.nc.us/humanresources/banding/ is growing to include forms

Cont. on page 10

Career Banding cont. from page 9

and procedures that will be used for Career Banded positions. The HR Managers have a draft procedural guide online and we are working on a guide for Supervisors and Hiring Managers. Information Technology positions are to be converted to their new titles effective February 1. Central HR hopes to provide training to the HR Managers and all IT Supervisors in late February or early March for Information Technology's April 1 implementation.

Groups of employees will be rolled over to the new Banded Classes at intervals over the next few years. Your supervisor will keep you informed well in advance of any changes to your position.

How can you get more information?

For more information, you may go to our DHHS Career Banding web site at www.dhhs.state.nc.us/humanresources/

banding or contact your local Human Resources office. You may also want to visit the Office of State Personnel's web site at <http://www.osp.state.nc.us/ExternalHome/> and click on Career Banding.

Also, watch for more articles in this newsletter in the months to come! We'll keep you posted as we learn more about how the new system will affect us. ■

Grants to NC agencies that help homeless total \$16.3 million

Agencies serving homeless people in North Carolina are slated to receive \$16.3 million in federal Continuum of Care Competitive Homeless Assistance Awards and Emergency Shelter Grants for 2006.

The funds, awarded at the end of 2005, will help support emergency shelters and transitional housing projects, said Linda Povlich, chairman of the North Carolina Interagency Coordinating Council on Homeless Programs. The ICCHP focused its resources over the past year to help agencies serving the homeless to complete the competitive grant applications.

"These funds will go a long way toward helping us to end chronic homelessness," Povlich said. "We're pleased

to have received these funds. They are critical toward helping our communities address the needs of homeless people and homeless families."

North Carolina's share of the \$1.18 billion in U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 2006 Continuum of Care competitive grants is \$13.1 million. Those funds are used to support the housing and services needs of the homeless. In addition, HUD awarded \$160 million in Emergency Shelter Grant funds, of which North Carolina will receive \$3.2 million.

In North Carolina more than 11,000 people – including 2,300 children – were identified as homeless on Jan. 26, 2005, during a one-day, point-in-time survey of homelessness in the state.

In addition, shelters funded through the Emergency Shelter Grant program provided services to more than 45,000 people in the previous year.

Detailed information about the grants is available at the following Internet link: www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/budget/2005/nc/totals.xls. ■

Will **YOU**
qualify for
the **EITC**
this year?

Earned Income Tax Credit

The **EITC** is for people who work and don't make much money. You must meet certain requirements to be eligible.

There's a lot to know about qualifying for the EITC. But the most important thing to know is that you can get help figuring it out.



Internal Revenue Service
www.irs.gov/eitc

Earned Income Tax Credit 2005 Eligibility Requirements



YOU MUST MEET THE FOLLOWING RULES TO CLAIM THE EITC

- ☐ Must have earned income
- ☐ Must have a valid Social Security number
- ☐ Investment income limited to \$2,700
- ☐ Generally must be a U.S. citizen or resident alien all year
- ☐ Cannot use "married filing separately" filing status
- ☐ Cannot be a qualifying child of another person
- ☐ Cannot file Form 2555 or 2555-EZ (related to foreign earned income)



YOU NEED TO HAVE WORKED AND HAVE EARNED INCOME LESS THAN

- ☐ \$11,750 (\$13,750 if married filing jointly) if there is no qualifying child
- ☐ \$31,030 (\$33,030 if married filing jointly) if there is one qualifying child
- ☐ \$35,263 (\$37,263 if married filing jointly) if there is more than one qualifying child

Special rules may apply for calculating earned income for members of the U.S. Armed Forces in combat zones and taxpayers in Presidential Disaster Areas. For more information visit us at www.irs.gov/eitc or refer to Publication 596.



QUALIFYING CHILD CRITERIA

The child must meet the relationship, age and residency tests.



COMMON ERRORS TO AVOID

- ☐ Taxpayers who claim a child who is not a qualifying child
- ☐ Married taxpayers who incorrectly file as single or head of household
- ☐ Taxpayers who under or over report Income
- ☐ Taxpayers or qualifying children with incorrect Social Security numbers.

Check out the **EITC Assistant**, an interactive tool that shows you whether or not you qualify, and why. Available on www.irs.gov/eitc or call **1-800-TAX-1040**, or ask your tax preparer.

Publication 962 Catalog Number 13772B (Rev. 12-2005)